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E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MOPS, SHUM, UNSC, CB, CH, VM, XC
SUBJECT: INDOCHINA BRIEFINGS

SUMMARY: DEP ASST SEC ROBERT OAKLEY DISCUSSED WITH SELECTED INTERESTED UN MISSIONS AND SECRETARIAT OFFICIALS NOV 17 LATEST US INFORMATION ON INDOCHINESE SITUATION AND EXCHANGED VIEWS ON POSSIBLE FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS. IN ADDITION TO PROVIDING UPDATED INFORMATION, OAKLEY'S VISIT SERVED AS REMINDER OF STRONG US INTEREST IN SEEING REDUCTION OF LEVEL OF TENSION IN INDOCHINA. END SUMMARY.

1. ON NOV 17 DAS OAKLEY DISCUSSED CURRENT SITUATION IN INDOCHINA WITH REPS FROM THAILAND (PERMREP PRACHA), SINGAPORE (PERMREP KOH), INDONESIA (DEP PERMREP SUWONDO), PHILIPPINES (ACTING PERMREP YANGO), JAPAN (MINISTER KATO AND POLCOUNS SEZAKI) AND YUGOSLAVIA (COUNSELLOR VUKOVIC) AS WELL AS SECRETARIAT OFFICIALS (AHMED, URQUHART AND

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BUFFUM). MAJOR POINTS MADE BY OAKLEY INCLUDED:

- -- INCREASING TENSIONS BETWEEN SRV AND GDK AND BETWEEN SRV AND PRC ARE OF CONCERN TO THE US. HISTORIC AND ETHNIC DIFFERENCES, WHICH FORM THE BASIS FOR THE CONFLICT, HAVE BEEN EXACERBATED BY THE SINO-SOVIET RIVALRY. WE WOULD LIKE TO SEE THE LEVEL OF TENSIONS REDUCED, AS WOULD THE NEIGHBORING STATES IN THE REGION.

- -- THERE HAS BEEN A BUILDUP OF EQUIPMENT AND TROOPS ON THE SRV/GDK BORDER, WITH 100-110,000 VIETNAMESE NOW FACING ABOUT 60,000 KHMER. THE LEVEL OF FIGHTING INCREASED IN OCTOBER AND DURING THE FIRST TWO WEEKS OF NOVEMBER. THE VIETNAMESE APPEAR MORE ACTIVE IN THE SVAY RIENG AND "FISH HOOK" AREAS WHILE THE KHMER ARE PENETRATING VIETNAMESE TERRITORY IN THE CENTRAL HIGHLANDS.

- -- VIETNAMESE INTENTIONS ARE NOT CLEAR. ALTHOUGH THEY HAVE THE CAPABILITY TO OCCUPY PHNOM PENH MILITARILY, THERE ARE SEVERAL FACTORS WHICH MIGHT INHIBIT THE SRV FROM MAKING SUCH A MOVE. THESE INCLUDE CONCERN ABOUT PUBLIC OPINION IN THE ASEAN AND OTHER COUNTRIES, THE FEAR OF BECOMING BOGGED DOWN IN A WIDESPREAD GUERRILLA WAR INSIDE KAMPUCHEA, AND CONCERN OVER HOW THE CHINESE MIGHT REACT ALONG THE SRV/PRC BORDER.

- -- THERE HAS BEEN NO SIGNIFICANT BUILDUP OF FORCES ON THE SRV/PRC BORDER. HANOI HAS STRENGTHENED ITS UNITS BETWEEN HANOI AND THE BORDER BUT CONCENTRATED ITS REINFORCEMENTS CLOSER TO HANOI RATHER THAN ON THE BORDER. WE HAVE SEEN NO MAJOR CHINESE REINFORCEMENTS MOVED TO THE BORDER.

- -- WE HAVE SEEN NO EVIDENCE CONFIRMING RADIO HANOI CHARGES OF MAJOR CHINESE INCURSIONS INTO VIETNAMESE TERRITORY. IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT THE SRV CHARGES APPEARED ON THE EVE OF TEN HSIAO-PING'S VISIT TO SOUTHEAST ASIA AND BEFORE THE SIGNING OF THE USSR-SRV FRIENDSHIP TREATY. THE VIETNAMESE MAY THEREFORE HAVE BEEN ATTEMPTING TO UNDERCUT TENG IN THAILAND, MALAYSIA

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AND SINGAPORE WHILE JUSTIFYING THE DECISION TO SIGN THE TREATY WITH MOSCOW.

-- THE US IS NOT TAKING SIDES IN THE DISPUTE. WE BELIEVE THAT THE PARTIES WOULD LIKE TO FIND A WAY OF CALMING THINGS DOWN BUT CENTURIES OF SUSPICION AND FEAR IN THE REGION, WITH THE ADDED NEW ELEMENT OF SINO-SOVIET RIVALRY, MAKE IT EXTREMELY DIFFICULT FOR THOSE INVOLVED TO BACK AWAY FROM THE CONFLICT.

2. IN RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS CONCERNING THE USSR-SRV FRIENDSHIP TREATY, OAKLEY SAID ITS MILITARY PROVISIONS APPEARED TO BE SIMILAR TO THOSE CONTAINED IN THE 1971 TREATY BETWEEN INDIA AND THE USSR. ITS IDEOLOGICAL TONE SEEMED CLOSER TO TREATIES BETWEEN THE USSR AND ITS EAST EUROPEAN ALLIES.

3. ASKED TO ASSESS THE MILITARY AND POLITICAL CAPABILITIES OF THE POL POT GOVERNMENT, OAKLEY SAID THAT ALTHOUGH THE GDK FOLLOWED AN EXTREMELY BRUTAL POLICY TOWARDS ITS PEOPLE, IN THE FACE OF ALL-OUT CONFLICT WITH VIETNAM, THE PEOPLE WOULD PROBABLY BACK THE GOVERNMENT. THE GDK MILITARY APPEARED TO BE EFFECTIVE AT SMALL SCALE, GUERRILLA ENGAGEMENTS WHICH THE VIETNAMESE, WITH THEIR CONVENTIONAL MILITARY TACTICS, HAD DIFFICULTY HANDLING. OAKLEY COMMENTED THAT THERE WAS AN INTERESTING CONVERGENCE OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND POLITICAL/SECURITY FACTORS IN THAT THE HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD OF THE PHNOM PENH REGIME WAS SO

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BAD AND ITS INTERNATIONAL IMAGE SO TARNISHED THAT THERE WOULD BE LITTLE PUBLIC REACTION IN THE WEST TO A MAJOR VIETNAMESE MOVE AGAINST KAMPUCHEA. THE CHINESE SEEMED TO BE AWARE OF THIS AND THERE WERE SOME SIGNS THAT THEY WERE INTERESTED IN ENCOURAGING THE GDK TO TAKE A MORE MODERATE APPROACH INTERNALLY. AMB KOH (SINGAPORE) REMARKED THAT DURING TENG HSIAO-PING'S RECENT VISIT TO SINGAPORE, HE HAD BEEN PREOCCUPIED WITH KAMPUCHEA AND HAD SOUGHT ASEAN'S EXPRESSION OF OPPOSITION TO A VIETNAMESE TAKEOVER. PM LEE HAD MENTIONED THE POOR IMAGE OF THE GDK AND SUGGESTED TO TENG THAT THE PRC MIGHT USE ITS INFLUENCE TO MODERATE PHNOM PENH'S BEHAVIOR. TENG HAD REPLIED THAT THE PRC WAS TRYING ITS BEST TO ENCOURAGE MODERATION.

4. JAPANESE AND YUGOSLAV MISOFFS EXPRESSED INTEREST IN POSSIBLE RETURN OF SIHANOUK. YUGOSLAV SAID HE HAD HEARD SIHANOUK WAS AGAIN ACTIVE IN PHNOM PENH. OAKLEY SAID SIHANOUK WAS GETTING SOME PUBLICITY NOW AND THAT EVEN THE VIETNAMESE TALKED ABOUT HIM. OAKLEY INDICATED IN RESPONSE TO QUESTION FROM AMB PRACHA (THAILAND) THAT WE DID NOT HAVE MUCH INFORMATION ON THE EXTENT OF VIETNAMESE-BACKED GUERRILLA ACTIVITY AGAINST THE PHNOM PENH REGIME. AVAILABLE EVIDENCE, HOWEVER,

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INDICATED THAT THE ACTIVITY WAS SPOTTY AND NOT WIDE-SPREAD.

5. RESPONDING TO QUESTION OF HOW THE CURRENT SITUATION IN INDOCHINA WOULD INFLUENCE US-SRV NORMALIZATION OF RELATIONS, OAKLEY SAID US POSITION REMAINED UNCHANGED. THE VIETNAMESE HAVE TOLD US THAT THEY NO LONGER DEMAND ECONOMIC AID AS A PRECONDITION FOR DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS. WE ARE NOW STUDYING THE SITUATION TO DETERMINE HOW BEST TO PROCEED.

6. OAKLEY REPLIED TO QUESTIONS CONCERNING THE US LETTER TO THE SECURITY COUNCIL AND FUTURE PLANS BY STATING THAT THE LETTER WAS OUR MEANS OF CALLING ATTENTION TO A VERY SERIOUS PROBLEM. WE DID NOT HAVE ANY PLANS TO GO BEYOND THAT. THE LETTER WAS NOT CONNECTED WITH THE SYG'S PROPOSED VISIT TO INDOCHINA, ALTHOUGH WE THOUGHT THE VISIT WOULD HELP EASE TENSIONS. ASKED ABOUT THE STATUS OF VISIT, OAKLEY SAID WE UNDERSTOOD HANOI HAD STILL NOT REPLIED TO THE SYG. AMB PRACHA SAID HE HAD TRIED TO CONVINCE SRV PERMREP HA VAN LAU THAT IT WOULD BE AN HONOR TO HAVE WALDHEIM VISIT VIETNAM AND WOULD BE IN VIETNAM'S INTERESTS.

7. RAFEEUDDIN AHMED, EXECUTIVE ASST TO THE SYG, AGAIN EXPRESSED WALDHEIM'S UNHAPPINESS WITH US LETTER. NOTING NEGATIVE REACTION OF USSR AND SRV TO LETTER, AHMED SAID SYG WAS STILL WAITING FOR VIETNAMESE RESPONSE TO PROPOSED VISIT.

8. OAKLEY'S DISCUSSIONS WERE VERY USEFUL AND MUCH APPRECIATED BY THOSE UN MISSIONS THAT ARE FOLLOWING INDOCHINESE DEVELOPMENTS AND CONCERNED ABOUT POSSIBLE ESCALATION OF TENSIONS. OAKLEY'S MEETINGS ALSO SERVED TO DEMONSTRATE THE HIGH LEVEL OF US INTEREST IN SEEKING WAYS TO REDUCE TENSIONS IN INDOCHINA AND TO REINFORCE ONGOING USUN EFFORTS TO ENCOURAGE AN EARLY VISIT BY WALDHEIM TO THE REGION. LEONARD

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